

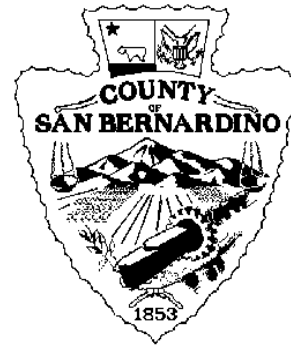
NEWS

From the Office of

Brad Mitzelfelt

Supervisor, First District
San Bernardino County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 25, 2010



For information, contact
David Zook (909) 387-4830
www.sbcounty.gov/mitzelfelt

Mitzelfelt Pushes for More Local Government Say in Mega Solar Projects

RIVERSIDE – State and Federal agencies need to consult and cooperate more with local jurisdictions to ensure that counties and their residents receive benefits from the development of renewable energy projects. That was the message delivered by San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt Wednesday to the Governor's Renewable Energy Policy Conference at the University of California, Riverside.

"These large-scale solar and wind energy projects have the potential to create jobs and bring significant economic benefit to local jurisdictions," said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, who represents much of the Mojave Desert where dozens of renewable energy projects have been proposed. "However, they also have serious impacts on our landscapes and demands for county services, so we need the state and federal governments to bring local government to the table to ensure that these impacts are minimized and the benefits to our residents are maximized."

Supervisor Mitzelfelt was a featured speaker as part of a panel discussion on the positive effects of renewable energy projects on local communities. The conference was attended by more than 300 people, including federal and state regulators and project proponents and developers.

Mitzelfelt emphasized that he supports renewable energy for energy independence and some limited local economic benefits, but pointed out that projects being processed by the California Energy Commission and U.S. Bureau of Land Management have not created a mechanism to offset the impacts to local governments on public services such as fire, law enforcement and roads. He recommended that the agencies implement policies to require mitigation agreements with local jurisdictions, or that a standard mitigation fee be established, based on the size or capacity of a power plant.

Requirements for habitat conservation and protection of sensitive species have a very real potential to limit future economic growth if the old model is followed, Mitzelfelt warned. If state and federal agencies require three acres of mitigation land for every one acre that is developed, the entire desert could wind up off limits to future uses such as mining, off-highway recreation, conservation, rock collecting, filming and military training. Just in San Bernardino County, there are proposals for wind and solar projects that would cover more than a half-million acres of land.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt warned that the traditional mitigation strategy of simply buying private land and turning it over to the government could cause grave economic harm to local economies, and instead called for management strategies designed to protect species and help them recover, such as control of predators that are devastating desert tortoise populations.

He also suggested that jurisdictions that site renewable energy projects should get "credit" against their "greenhouse gas" reduction requirements under global warming laws like AB 32 and SB 375.

Mitzelfelt said his participation significantly increased awareness of local government concerns at the conference, and hopes it will spur more efforts to include local governments in planning, prioritizing, locating, developing regulatory requirements for and permitting renewable energy projects.

“I look forward to joining with other cities and counties and sitting down with the state and federal managers to ensure that everyone benefits from this rapidly expanding industry,” he said.